

SPEECH
OF
MR. SCHENCK, OF OHIO,
IN REPLY TO MR. GIDDINGS,
IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DECEMBER 27, 1849,
IN DEBATE UPON A RESOLUTION
TO APPOINT THE STANDING COMMITTEES.

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MR. SCHENCK OF OHIO

OF THE OHIO LEGISLATURE

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1871

SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER: It is with much reluctance I rise to take any part in this irregular and somewhat extraordinary debate. But I feel that, as a Northern man, and a representative from Ohio, I can no longer remain silent. I must endeavor, in a few words, to mark my own position, and the stand I take in relation to certain matters, whatever other gentlemen may think proper to do. Sir, we have been accustomed here, for a long time past, and more especially of late, and during the exciting scenes and discussions of the present session, to hear the North daily lectured; the North taunted with base subserviency; the North told to "stand up and face the music;" the representatives from the Northern States addressed continually by certain gentlemen with a tone of arrogance, as if they, forsooth, were the only and peculiar champions of freedom and of right on this floor. I am tired of this offensive and unjustifiable arrogance. If these gentlemen, who seem to think themselves called to undertake a guardian care of the North, would confine themselves to general lectures only, whatever I might think of the bad taste of such pretensions, I could pass it all by. But when they go further, as my colleague (Mr. GIDDINGS) has done this morning, and misrepresent to the country the position and course of other members, including myself, I feel that I am called upon at once to contradict and repel such misrepresentation.

Mr. Speaker, before I interrupted my colleague (Mr. GIDDINGS) with any interrogation as to the effect of his own course on the election of the presiding officer of this body, he had volunteered the charge that it was owing to the conduct of the northern Whigs of this House, that you, sir—a southern gentleman and a slaveholder, a Democrat—now occupy that chair. He had declared that if the Whig party had put up a candidate from the North, known to be in favor of what has acquired the name of the Wilmot proviso—the provision of the ordinance of 1787, excluding slavery from the territories—such a candidate could have been elected in an hour; and thus he sought to fix upon the Whigs, and particularly upon the northern Whigs, of this House, the blame and responsibility of our failing to effect the organization we desired. It was thereupon that I asked my colleague the question which so excited him, and led to his further attack upon the Whig party, and upon the late Whig speaker. I inquired of him why, if he were really in favor of any northern man who was for the Wilmot proviso, he had not taken the Whig nominee, (Mr. WINTHROP,) who was known to have always sustained that measure? Why did he refuse his vote to such a

a candidate, thus presented to him; and pursue a course, by withholding it, which he knew must contribute, and which did, in fact, contribute to effect the election of a southern man and a slaveholder, to whose elevation he professed to be opposed? My colleague replied that he did not recognise the candidate of the Whig party as being in favor of the Wilmot proviso. Indeed? And how does my colleague prove his extraordinary assertion that Mr. WINTHROP is opposed to the general sentiment and opinion of the North on that subject? Does he refer to the fact that Mr. WINTHROP happened to be the member in this House who, in 1844 moved to incorporate that very clause of the ordinance of 1787 into the bill to organize a territorial government for Oregon, when he (Mr. GIDDINGS) and I, and all the northern Whigs voted, together with Mr. WINTHROP, to put it there? You must remember it, Mr. Speaker, by this token, that, whether reluctantly or not, you had to help us pass the bill, after the provision against slavery was thus inserted. That was long before the honorable gentleman from Pennsylvania, (Mr. WILMOT,) whose name is now identified with the measure, had been heard of in that connexion. Or does my colleague refer to the fact that our candidate voted for that same proposition, in 1846, as an amendment to the "three million bill," being the very occasion when, happening to be presented by the gentleman from Pennsylvania, (Mr. WILMOT,) the proviso was christened after him, as its putative father? Does my colleague look to the recorded votes, and to the past course of Mr. WINTHROP, at all? No, sir, for he well knows—none better than he—that they would all contradict him. He has left years of legislation, of continuous consistent conduct, on the part of the gentleman from Massachusetts out of view. The direct proof is all against him. The record and the history convict him of misrepresentation; and therefore he prefers to arrive by inference and presumption at his conclusion. Nay, sir, my colleague, in this very debate, contradicts himself; for he has just now explained his hostility to the Whig candidate, whom he has contributed to defeat, not upon the ground of that gentleman being opposed to the Wilmot proviso; but because the committee of this House on the District of Columbia, in the last Congress, was constituted, as he says, in such manner as to uphold and promote the traffic in slaves.

Mr. GIDDINGS (Mr. SCHENCK yielding the floor) explained that his objection to the gentleman from Massachusetts for Speaker was, that after the present Executive of the United States was nominated, that gentleman (Mr. WINTHROP) had declared his opinion at a Whig meeting in Massachusetts, and had moved to lay on the table the proposition of a gentleman from Cambridge, which pledged the Whig party against the support of any man who was opposed to the Wilmot proviso. His objection to the gentleman arose also from the fact that he had gone for Texas, in a public toast at Fanueil Hall, Boston, in July, 1845, before Texas was annexed. His objections to that gentleman were also

founded upon the acts of his whole public life, and particularly upon what had been said in Whig caucus upon the Saturday evening previous to the commencement of the present session, when the gentleman's colleague had said, that it was no part of the Whig policy to adopt the Wilmot proviso.

Mr. ASHMUN. To whom does the gentleman refer?

Mr. GIDDINGS. To you.

Mr. ASHMUN. I did not use any such language.

Mr. GIDDINGS. The public have seen the language. It was, I believe, that neither the Whig party of Massachusetts nor the people of Massachusetts made the Wilmot proviso a test.

Mr. ASHMUN. It is not true that I ever made such a remark.

Mr. GIDDINGS said his objections had arisen from these and all the other demonstrations which the gentleman from Massachusetts and his friends had made in sustaining for President a man whose education, interests, and associations led him to oppose the Wilmot proviso.

Mr. SCHENCK (resuming.) My colleague now shifts his ground, Mr. Speaker. He is conscious that that he stood upon was untenable; and he would multiply his issues, and beat around desperately for new objections to the Whig candidate. But, sir, I am not to be drawn by this from the object I had in view. I have not proposed to enter upon any formal vindication of the course and character of the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. WINTHROP,) nor to allude to him, except so far as he is connected with the general Whig cause, and has been entitled to our consistent support upon this floor. That gentleman needs no help from me, nor from any one, to vindicate himself from the aspersions, and repel the assaults, of my colleague, as I think my colleague has by this time begun to discover. A word or two only, therefore, of reply will I make to these new points; and in doing so, I feel that I owe an apology to the gentleman from Massachusetts for seeming to undertake for a moment a defence which he would make with so much more ability himself.

What my colleague may have found in the newspapers in relation to the course of Mr. WINTHROP, or sentiments avowed by him at Whig meetings in Faneuil Hall or elsewhere, I do not feel called upon to inquire or discuss. I shall ransack no files, nor hunt through the prints of the day to discover. The honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. ALLEN,) now at the elbow of my colleague, and who seems to be performing the part of his tender or prompter in this attack, may possibly be better posted up in that sort of history than either of us. To me, however, it seems sufficient comment and answer both, for such charges, that the State of Massachusetts herself, or the better and sounder part of her, has not failed to continue her confidence in the distinguished gen-

tleman whose opinions and actions have been thus impeached. And the Whigs of Massachusetts, the people of that old State, never to be doubted for her political orthodoxy, are not apt lightly to give or withhold their confidence. Does my colleague expect to persuade me that Massachusetts and Faneuil Hall have gone for the extension of slavery into the new Territories, and were for annexation and war? His newspaper reports and speeches and toasts at Whig meetings will need violent construction, I apprehend, to warrant such conclusion as that.

But my colleague expands, and generalizes, and makes still more comprehensive, his objections to our late Whig candidate for Speaker. He takes exception to "the acts of the whole public life" of that gentleman; "and particularly"—mark the specific and leading charge under this broad arraignment—"and *particularly* to what was said by that gentleman's colleague (Mr. ASHMUN,) at a Whig caucus at the commencement of the present session! Why, sir, this is indeed pressing a gentleman hard, that he shall not only be held accountable for his own unfortunate sinnings, but must be responsible also, in a vicarious capacity, for whatever may be said or done by any of his colleagues. God help us! I hope that is not to be the rule of judgment hereafter. I, for one, especially protest against it. I shall have doubtless sins enough of my own every day to answer for to my constituents, to the country, and my conscience, without adding to the catalogue the perversity, the intolerance, the extreme opinions, the fanaticism, the unfair dealings and misrepresentations, or other errors and misdoings, of which any colleague of *mine*, if I may be allowed to suppose such a case, may at any time unhappily be suspected or convicted. Neither will I be so ungenerous as to expect my colleague there, (Mr. GIDDINGS,) because of that relation between us, to suffer in name or fame because of any of my short comings or excesses. But, sir, even if this rule of substitution of colleagues were recognised as prevailing, the specification in this case was most unfortunate; for the House has heard the statement of my colleague, in regard to the other honorable member from Massachusetts, (Mr. ASHMUN,) promptly met and answered by that gentleman with flat and positive denial. That charge could not stand as against the principal, much less against any second person to whom it was to be "particularly" imputed.

This is of very little consequence, though, if "all the acts of the whole public life" of Mr. WINTHROP have been wrong. Sir, I am afraid my colleague, by his eagerness to make out his case, with his wholesale and sweeping charges against others, will be held to have committed himself so far as to forfeit whatever little credit might otherwise have attached to his statements. Such indiscriminate denunciation usually furnishes its own antidote—carrying its contradiction upon its face. But what does my colleague mean by it? He would

have us believe, in justification of his course in the election of Speaker, and in excuse of his opposition to Mr. WINTHROP, that he regards that gentleman as one who has favored the extension of slavery, advocating the annexation of Texas and its kindred schemes. Now, sir, he knows—nobody better than my colleague knows—how utterly opposed all this is to the record. He knows that throughout the whole of the twenty-eighth Congress, during which this measure was brought forward and consummated, from the beginning to the end, in every form, and on every occasion, the gentleman from Massachusetts was found voting and acting and laboring with the great body of the Whig party against annexation. And equally well my colleague knows—for we were all here in those times together—that the honorable member from Indiana, (Mr. BROWN,) whom he would have made Speaker the other day, was just as constantly, and in every form, voting and laboring to bring about annexation. But I may have more to say about his consistency in the support of that gentleman before I have done.

I return now to the reason first assigned by my colleague for his opposition to the gentleman from Massachusetts—that which was the whole burden of his speech to the House, before he interrupted me, and appended the further objections to which I have just adverted—the composition of the committees in the last Congress. He has stated that certain of those committees were studiously arranged by the gentleman from Massachusetts, then Speaker, in such manner as to protect and promote slavery and the slave trade.

Is it not a little remarkable that, while my colleague, and a few other gentlemen at the North, who sympathize and act with him, have made that charge against the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, he has been at the same time, and as bitterly, assailed by southern Democrats—as, for instance, in the very vehement speech made the other day by the gentleman from Tennessee, (Mr. JOHNSON,) for having constituted, as they say, those very committees in such manner as unfairly to favor the North?

But to the record again. My colleague cannot deny, in the face of that, that the majority of each of the two committees to which he has referred—the Committee on Territories and the Committee on the District of Columbia—happened to be composed of northern men. What then? Why, he says that the Committee on Territories did not report a bill to organize territorial governments for California and New Mexico, with the provision of the ordinance against slavery, until peremptorily ordered to do so by the House, on the motion of our colleague, (Mr. ROOT.) And this fact is paraded before the country, with much flourish and pretence of indignation, as an impeachment of the committee, who were thus neglectful of duty, and of the Speaker who appointed them. Most triumphantly has this charge been answered, and nailed to the

counter as base issue, by the other gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. ROCKWELL.) The truth appears simply to be that the committee, though apparently appointed on the 7th of December, was not, in fact, announced until the 10th; and on the 13th, when Mr. Root, so impatient of delay, offered his resolution, they had not yet had opportunity to meet and act, nor had the subject been referred to them. Then they did report on the 20th the California bill, embracing the provision of the ordinance, being about as soon as the mere manual labor of framing, with proper form and consideration, and writing out a long bill of that kind, could be performed. And all this, also, my colleague (Mr. GIDDINGS) well knew and understood.

But he says the Committee on the District of Columbia was arranged with a view to promote the slave trade—"studiously arranged," is his language, "so as to protect the infamous commerce in human flesh carried on in this city." Does any body believe that? Or would any body, not mad with one idea, impute such a design? What are the facts again? That committee, like the Committee on the Territories, was composed in the last Congress of five members from free States and four from slave States. My colleague complains that they did not make any move to abolish the slave trade in this District at the first session of the Congress, and yet the Speaker committed the enormity of reappointing the same committee at the second session without change. Sir, I am unwilling to impute a deliberate purpose of deception to the honorable gentleman; but his statement is too well adapted to deceive, in this particular, those who are not familiar with the practices of legislation. My colleague should have remembered to state that the committees of this House are rarely changed at all at a second session; that they are reappointed with the same members, as a matter of course, except with occasional exchanges, or where vacancies are to be filled. But in this instance he has again spoken without the record, and the facts are peculiarly against him. It happens to be one of the excepted cases. There were two changes made in this committee—Mr. BROWN, of Mississippi, being appointed in the place of Mr. McDOWELL, of Virginia; and Mr. GAINES, of Kentucky, taking the place of Mr. SIMS, of South Carolina. And that is not all. These very two gentlemen, newly added to the committee—southern men though they were—happened to be favorably disposed, along with all the five northern men on the committee, to the stopping of the slave trade in this District; and it was after this change in the constitution of the committee that a bill for that purpose was reported to the House.

Mr. GIDDINGS. Does my colleague mean to say that that committee reported a bill to prohibit the sale and transfer of human beings within the District of Columbia?

Mr. SCHENCK. I will read the title of the bill, for I have it now before me. It is entitled a bill "to prohibit the introduction of slaves into the District of Columbia for merchandise, sale, or hire;" and its provisions, including the various penalties of fine and imprisonment for the violation of them, correspond with that title. It is long, or I would read it all, if permitted. But I will advise gentlemen, who are curious to examine for themselves, that the whole bill may be found printed at large in the Congressional Globe for the 2d session of the 30th Congress, at page 415, under date of the proceedings of the 31st of January, 1848. It is true that bill did not entirely prohibit the sale of slaves here—the transfer from one person to another residing within the District; or, in other words, it did not entirely abolish slavery in this District, for the one would amount virtually to the other. It has been justly said, however, by the gentleman from Massachusetts, that it did more than had ever been proposed by any bill in this House before. I remember well it was known and spoken of, and regarded at the time, as a bill to abolish the slave trade in the District of Columbia. It was so understood then; and whatever the extent of its provisions, and however such a law might be considered as failing to accomplish all that is desirable, it must not be denied that it went farther than any committee of members from either North or South had ever endeavored to go before. And what was the action on this bill subsequently in the House, to show the position and disposition of the members of that committee on the subject? A motion made by Mr. HARALSON, of Georgia, to lay it upon the table, was rejected by 172 nays to 72 yeas; and among the nays, in favor of the bill, were six out of the nine members of the committee, including Mr. GAINES, of Kentucky; and of the other three, one (Mr. BROWN, of Mississippi) declared himself entirely in favor of the bill, and another (Mr. CHAPMAN, of Maryland) was willing it should pass with an amendment which he proposed. And this is the committee for the appointment of which my colleague had to labor to defeat the re-election of a Whig Speaker, and a northern man—a committee and a Speaker, under whose auspices a more nearly successful effort was made than ever before by any other to abolish those "slave pens," and "heart-rending scenes of human woe," and "mournful processions through the streets," to which he has treated us with stereotyped phrase again to-day, and over which he sheds so many tears, real or affected. Sir, I am very much afraid sometimes that my colleague does not really wish to get rid of the slave pens. That would be to lose a part of his capital—his political stock in trade. But I would rather not entertain such suspicions, and hope I am mistaken.

But, Mr. Speaker, how can it be possible after all, that my colleague (Mr. GIDDINGS) has been influenced to hostility against the Whig party, and the Whig candidate for Speaker, as he alleges, by his exception to the composi-

tion of any of the committees appointed at the last session of Congress? It will be remembered that two years ago he refused to vote for the same gentleman, then also the nominee of the Whigs for that station, and elected without his help, and in spite of his opposition. Those committees then had not been formed—no man knew what they would be, nor who would have the appointing of them—and nothing short of a spirit of prophecy could enable my colleague at that time to find such an excuse for his course. No, sir; there must be some other reason for the gentleman's course—some other explanation. That explanation, I conceive, is to be found in a certain peculiar organization of my colleague's mind—in a certain mode of reasoning in such cases peculiar to him, and to those who are accustomed to act and sympathize with him in his extreme course and opinions. It is this. He cares not what may have been the past course of a man; he disregards a life of consistency in his candidate—a life affirming and illustrating particular views entertained in relation to great political questions. All this goes for nothing with him, and such as he; and he prefers pledges, though they be probably “false as dicer's oaths,” made to order on the eve of an election, to effect the purposes of the occasion. Sir, with due deference to those who square their conduct by such rule, I confess my faith is very different. I care very little for mere pledges of this sort made at any time—I care not at all for them when manifestly made under circumstances which should induce us to believe that somebody is intended to be cheated. But I do find much assurance in a life of consistent action, marked upon the records of the country—action which has been without the temptations to influence, that are too often used to procure pledges from a candidate.

Mr. Speaker, I do not reason *a priori* merely to the conclusion that this has been my colleague's principle in the selection of his candidates. It was very strikingly exemplified at the last presidential election, when he took Mr. Van Buren upon his naked promises, made in the face of a long lifetime of notorious political subserviency to the South. But I will not go so far back even as that, to find my colleague's position. I hope to be excused for referring again to what has so recently occurred in this body. It is the first time, as it may be the last, that I shall revive a recollection of that memorable scene of political bargaining, not agreeable now to the feelings of many who were concerned in it, any more than it was reputable to them as a “business transaction.” Every body recollects how a certain “*Bill*” was brought forward not many days ago, to make a Speaker of this House, and how like many another unlucky bill, after a first, a second, and a third reading, it was lost on its final passage. (Laughter.) Every body recollects the position in which the respective parties to the contract were placed after that failure. I beg the gen-

tleman from Indiana (Mr. BROWN) to pardon the reference I must now make to his position as the candidate on that occasion, inasmuch as it becomes necessary for me to answer and show that of my colleague. The gentleman from Indiana had stood upon the record through two or three Congresses, voting directly against the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. WINTHROP) on all these questions. That gentleman (Mr. BROWN) went for the annexation of Texas ; for stifling debate ; for laying on the table and smothering resolutions inquiring into the propriety of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and extending the ordinance of 1787 over all the territories belonging to the United States. These were that gentleman's votes ; he was consistent in them, and my colleague knew it ; yet he chose to vote for the member from Indiana upon a pledge of that gentleman, manifestly vamped up for the occasion, contradicting the tenor of his whole previous course in public life. Sir, I have not much faith in these death-bed repentances. I trust little to these sudden conversions ; and least of all will I be deceived by any such, when evidently made, or professed, under the strong attractive influence of a reward just ahead. But does it not appear, as I said? Am I not compelled to believe that my colleague's manner of reasoning, and principle of action is such, that he would rather at any time drive a huckstering bargain with some trading politician, poor in character and in conduct; or, who had been always at hostility with him before, and had now nothing to offer for his vote but a naked promise to serve his purposes ;—that he would rather do this, than to rely upon that best assurance for the future, which most men justly think they can find only in a past career, regulated by high and honorable principle, and consisting in deeds, and acts, and rules of conduct, which accord with what is desired by him who yields his support ?

But there is still more proof to be produced under this head. Two years ago, at the beginning of the last Congress, Mr. Winthrop was, as at this session, a candidate for the Speakership, the regularly nominated candidate of the Whigs. My colleague, who was then still professing some certain sort of adherence to the Whig party, was unwilling to sustain that nomination, unless upon the condition that he could get pledges that would suit his particular views from the nominee. Another gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. PALFREY) then, *but not now* a member, was put forward by the little band of impracticables of that date, as the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WILMOT,) was the other day, to open a negotiation—a secret, clandestine negotiation, on their own private account with the candidate. Mr. PALFREY asked for himself, and with permission to communicate it, just “to some gentlemen who entertain similar views,” (to wit, my colleague,) a promise from Mr. Winthrop that he would, if elected, arrange certain committees of the House in a particular way,

so as to secure certain objects. And what was the reply? Not such as my colleague and his associates had from a more accommodating personage at this session, when the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WILMOT) was assured, in the private diplomatic note, that the committees would be organized "so as to satisfy himself and his friends," but a noble, dignified repulsion of such secret approaches. The answer of the candidate on that occasion gave so proper and well merited a rebuke of this practice of bargaining for pledges in return for votes, and so accords with the sentiments which I entertain, but can less happily express, that I must be permitted to quote a portion of it. It is doctrine and language very proper to be revived in view of recent events.

"I have uniformly said, to all who have inquired of me, that my policy in organizing the House must be sought for in my general conduct and character as a public man.

"I have been for seven years a member of Congress from our common State of Massachusetts. My votes are on record. My speeches are in print. If they have not been such as to inspire confidence in my course, nothing that I could get up for the occasion, in the shape of pledges or declarations of purpose, ought to do so.

"Still less could I feel it consistent with my own honor, after having received and accepted a general nomination, and just on the eve of the election, to frame answers to specific questions, like those which you have proposed, to be shown to a few gentlemen, as you suggest, and to be withheld from the great body of the Whigs."

Does any one doubt, that if my colleague could have obtained an answer less honorable to the head and heart of the candidate, he would have voted for him *then*? Can any one doubt that a secret understanding, if Mr. WINTHROP had been base enough to make it, would have conciliated and secured the support of my colleague *now*?

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that I am tired of hearing certain gentlemen arrogate to themselves the right to lecture the Whig party upon its duties. There might be possibly some more appearance of propriety in it if they had not entirely separated themselves, as they have, from their political connexion with us; but, under any circumstances, I do not recognise or admit the privilege of gentlemen, in a pharisaical spirit, to preach purity and good conduct to all the rest of the world, assuming themselves to be the peculiar and only champions of all that is right, and seeking to put every body else in the wrong.

There are gentlemen equally intolerant and fanatical at either end of this Union, who demand that all legislation upon particular subjects shall be of a sectional character, and would proscribe those who differ from them. Like my colleague, they would require pledges and promises in advance, to succumb to them, as the only condition of their support, either to aid in the organization of the House, or to proceed with the business of the nation for which we are assembled. They can give no countenance to any one who, coming

from a different quarter of the Union from themselves, has independently and honestly avowed and advocated opinions and measures in accordance with the views in which he has been educated, and the convictions which have been strengthened by observation and reflection. I protest against that spirit of intolerance, let it come from what quarter it may. What does it mean? My colleague (Mr. GIDDINGS) has said there were some "other northern Whigs"—*northern Whigs* only, observe—for whom he might perhaps have voted for Speaker; while it has been made very manifest that there are gentlemen here from *southern* States who have deemed a residence at the North a very great, if not an insuperable, objection. What does this mean, I ask; and to what does such proscription tend? If we of the North will not vote for a southern man merely because he *is* a southern man, and men of the South will not vote for a northern man because he *is* a northern man, and if that principle is to be carried out from here into all our national politics and elections, what must be the result? Disunion. *That itself is disunion.* You may disguise and cover it up as you please, but that it will be. It may, perhaps, be regarded as but the first step in disunion; but the consequence follows as inevitably as fate. One section—the North or the South—must always have the majority. Disfranchise all upon the other side, and the Union could not hold together a day; it ought not to hold together, upon such conditions, a day. On this floor now we have from the free States one hundred and forty Representatives, and ninety from the slave States. Suppose the relative numbers were reversed? Would we submit to be denied all participation in privileges here? Not for an hour. And should we ask such submission from others? Never! The Whig party say, never. The true people of the North say, never.

And it is this liberality of sentiment, this independence of mere sectional influences, whether found among Whigs or Democrats, which constitute the sin and offence in the eyes of my colleague.

The Whig party, as any other great *national* party must ever be, is divided upon questions of local and sectional character. They know that this Union resulted from a compromise between the free and the slave States. As citizens, and men, they entertain such views upon the subject of slavery as education, association, habits of thought and conviction, have impressed upon them. For myself, I am in favor of the ordinance of 1787, and of extending its free provisions over all territories belonging to the United States. I have always voted in that way with the gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. WINTHROP,) and other northern Whigs. I will gladly go for putting an end forever to the slave trade within this District, taking care in doing so to avoid any unnecessarily offensive and irritating language or manner. I am for abolishing slavery within this District, only having due regard to the conditions which

are required of us as the local legislature, which has in trust the protection of rights and persons here. But I am not on these accounts to stand here and claim to disfranchise every man from a slave State, because he may happen to differ from me on such questions. I voted through the many days during which we were struggling to organize the House, part of the time for northern men, and part of the time for a southern man. I was willing to go for any gentleman whom I believed to be a conservative and a true Whig; and, above all, a sincere friend of the Union. But failing, after days and weeks of efforts, to elect such a man, and finding that from both extremes of the Union there had come here gentlemen who were resolved to stand out, impracticably and forever, "to the bitter end," unless they could compel the majority to come to them, I was one of those who very reluctantly consented to the plurality system, as the only practicable mode of organizing the House. I hope I do my colleague no injustice when I say, that I knew the obstinacy of his character, and that no impression could be made upon him.

Mr. GIDDINGS. You are right.

Mr. SCHENCK. My colleague then admits, that unless the House of Representatives would come to him, the House could not be organized. He would prefer, in the language of the gentleman from Georgia, (Mr. TOOMBS,) that "disorder should reign forever," rather than permit an organization on any other ground than such as he should dictate. I had no feeling in common with such a spirit. Believing it to be entirely constitutional, although, in other circumstances, of doubtful expediency, and perhaps an unsafe precedent, I voted for the plurality rule. I beg leave to say, however, that it is not true, as my colleague has asserted, that I knew that the Whigs of this House knew, that the election of the present Speaker would be the result. We knew that the organization of the House would be effected by it, and the business of the nation be permitted to proceed. We did not know—we could not reasonably suspect—but that when the issue came between the present Speaker and a northern man, who had not given pledges—yes, who had given the best of pledges—who was known to entertain opinions upon these local questions similar to those which prevail among men of all parties at the North—who, upon the record everywhere, and through long years of a distinguished legislative career, had supported and ably advocated the principles and measures which commend themselves most to the peculiar views of northern men;—we did not know but that when the issue was presented between these two gentlemen, some of my colleague's associates, at least, might be induced to take the gentleman from Massachusetts, even as a choice of evils, if they chose to consider it such. But we found that we were mistaken. My colleague, and those who act with him, designed that there should be a southern

man and a slaveholder in that chair, to appoint the committees, and direct the course of legislation, unless they could have the control of every thing; and they have succeeded, and are gratified. We shall see what will be the judgment of the country—aye, and the judgment of the North, too, for which they profess to be the sole representatives here—upon such conduct. Let it be what it will, I was determined to repel the false accusation, made against the Whigs who have stood by their integrity, and to fasten the responsibility upon those to whom it belongs.

But my colleague, and his little company of Purists, have not been alone in their position as Disorganizers and Impracticables. Fanaticism and intolerance have not been confined to the North. We have had fulminations about disunion here also from the southern sky. Some honorable gentlemen, from certain of the slave States, have found occasion, because *their* demand for pledges, in advance, as to the course of legislation, could not be gratified, to make this Hall resound with menaces and warnings. I was sorry to hear distinguished gentlemen declare, that they had rather put an end to this Union than have what they choose to consider the present condition of things continue. But I have not been alarmed by such threats. Precedents for speeches of that sort may be found elsewhere; proving nothing, however, but the truth of the old adage, that “extremes meet.” I will read, for example, from one which I have now in my hand. Hear this orator of another arena:

“*We confess that we intend to trample under foot the Constitution of this Country; we call upon you to do likewise. Shall I tell you why? You can never make a revolution in this matter until you make the common sense and the consciences of the people superior to their statute books; until you arraign against the despotism of the majority the conscientious convictions of the mass of the minority, whatever it be.*”

Do gentlemen around recognise that language? Can they tell from what latitude, from which side of Mason and Dixon’s line, it comes? Does it not sound very like something we listened to lately, uttered in eloquent and impassioned words from Georgia? Is not that denunciation of the despotism of the majority over the minority, which must be resisted, almost identical with what was declared by an honorable member from Alabama? But let us read further:

“Daniel Webster says, you are a law-abiding people; that the glory of New England is, that it is a law-abiding community. Shame on it, if this be true; if even the religion of New England sinks as low as its statute book. But I say, *we are not a law-abiding community. God be thanked for it!*”

“That is the error of American politics. We have forced the Democratic party out of the field, the original ally of the slave power. We have sent the Whigs into an alliance with southern slaveholders. It is a natural alliance. It is the Lords of the Lash and the Lords of the Loom associated. It is the capital of the country and the conservatism of the country against the ideas of the country.”

Ah, sir, that allusion to New England betrays the locality, which but for that it might have been difficult to determine. These extracts are from a speech of Mr. Wendell Phillips, of Boston, made at an anti-slavery meeting held in that city one day in last May; and the account I have of the proceedings there, furnishes a series of resolutions "to match." Does not this sound very much like nullification?

Mr. GIDDINGS inquired, if the gentleman called Mr. Phillips a Free Soiler?

Mr. SCHENCK. I have supposed he was. He is perhaps what is called in Massachusetts, "a conscience Whig;" at least he belongs to the category of those men who require the majority to come to the minority, and who declare, if they do not, "Let disunion come, and disorder reign forever!" The Whig party are charged by this Mr. Phillips as belonging to the "conservatism" of the country. Sir, I accept the epithet; it is not odious to me. Let us be the conservatives of the country. Coming from the North and the South, representing every sectional interest; but with a wise and honest toleration for these differences, let us act together for the general good, and for the maintenance of the just rights of the whole. Let us stand firmly in defence of the Union, come the assault from whatever direction it may. I for one, as far as my feeble power may go, declare it to be my determination to be ever ready to maintain these common rights and common interests, here and elsewhere, as a citizen and a representative, wherever my hand, or my voice, or my vote can do it, against all impracticable men, disorganizers or disunionists, whether they be of the North or of the South.